Library Management: Current Trends, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This work explores the management of academic libraries, focusing on their role in supporting the information needs of their institutions through the provision of resources and services. It highlights the unique, not-for-profit nature of libraries and their reliance on funding from parent institutions, donations, grants, and government allocations. Emphasizing participative management as a modern and effective style, the study discusses how involving staff in decision-making processes can enhance productivity and service quality despite potential delays and costs. The work also addresses the challenges and prospects of managing libraries in a rapidly changing environment, underscoring the importance of adaptive and inclusive management practices.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Information Needs, Management, Participative Management, Library and Information Science

Introduction

Libraries are established to meet the information needs of specific groups in defined environments, particularly in academic settings. They support the curriculum of their parent institutions by providing relevant resources that enhance teaching, learning, and research. Libraries are not just repositories of knowledge; they also offer various resources and services by acquiring, organizing, managing, and making these resources accessible to patrons.

Management, involving decision-making and organized activities by a group of people, is essential for controlling complex organizations to achieve desired goals. This applies to libraries as well, which require similar managerial skills to other organizations, though libraries are typically service-oriented and not-for-profit. Academic libraries, funded by parent institutions, donations, grants, and government allocations, provide services free of charge.

In modern management, participative management is considered effective due to rapid changes in the environment, politics, culture, and technology. This management style in libraries leads to high productivity and quality but can also result in delays and costly decisions. Participative management involves staff in decision-making processes, enabling them to realize their potential, utilize their professional training, and improve the library's effectiveness.

This work examines the ways library management is conducted, focusing on current trends, challenges, and prospects.

Concept of Library Management

In today's library systems, a wide array of professionals with diverse specializations handles various activities. These professionals include Librarians, Library Administrators, Reference Librarians, Classifiers, Cataloguers, LIS Teachers, Content Developers, Content Designers, Content Managers, Bibliometricians, Librometricians, Indexers, Network Managers, Data Entry Operators, Thesaurus Designers, among others.

Management in libraries encompasses several functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, reporting, budgeting, controlling, supervising, and directing. Planning is an ongoing process that determines the organization's direction. Adeyoyin (2011) states that planning involves selecting missions and objectives and the actions to achieve them, which requires decision-making. Effective library management aligns with the parent institution's objectives and purposes.

Supervision involves overseeing and directing activities in the library. According to Nkang (2002), it includes advising, guiding, encouraging, and improving staff performance to achieve library goals. Effective supervision fosters cooperation and successful task implementation. Forsman (2001) explains that staffing involves selecting, placing, training, developing, and compensating employees. Evaluating performance based on effort and

ability is also crucial. Enthusiastic and committed staff ensure that library resources and services are effectively utilized.

Budgeting is essential for all library activities. Mason (2000) describes budgeting as planning for expenditure and revenue over a specific period. Libraries require funds for both capital and recurrent expenditures.

Library management processes include:

1. **Subordinate Super-Ordinate Relationship:**
   - Ensuring efficient governance and productive work atmosphere through strong vertical relationships.
   - Advantages:
     - Employees feel integrated into the system.
     - Enhances innovation and problem-solving.
     - Encourages job satisfaction and hard work.

2. **Operational Autonomy:**
   - Encourages innovation by allowing freedom of thought and application in task execution.
   - Advantages:
     - Enables top administrators to focus on higher responsibilities.
     - Reduces trust deficit and motivates proactive performance.
     - Empowers quick decision-making within prescribed rules.

3. **Human Resource Development:**
   - Periodic training and orientation keep employees updated with the latest tools and techniques.
   - Advantages:
     - Prepares staff to meet institutional challenges.
     - Promotes efficient resource utilization and adaptability.
     - Emphasizes continuous exposure to technology.

4. **Employees Well-Being:**
   - Administrators are responsible for ensuring employee welfare, which enhances morale and motivation.
   - Advantages:
     - Provision of facilities like housing, medical benefits, and recreation.
     - Promotes a healthy work atmosphere and increases productivity.
     - Strengthens employer-employee relationships.

5. **Human Resource Retention:**
   - Retention of trained staff is crucial for institutional stability.
   - Advantages:
     - Attracts and retains talent with flexible policies.
     - Ensures equal growth opportunities and career advancement.
     - Recognizes employee contributions and supports continuing education.

6. **Periodic Reforms:**
   - Adapting to technological advancements and embracing necessary changes.

- o Advantages:
  - ▪ Enhances professional efficiency with new technologies.
  - ▪ Maximizes the use of conventional information sources.
  - ▪ Converts obsolete electronic documents for modern access.
  - ▪ Introduces fee-based services for sustainability.

By implementing these management processes, libraries can improve their operations, foster a supportive work environment, and ensure the effective use of resources.

Managerial Styles in Libraries

Librarians, as leaders, use a range of influence strategies, from subtle persuasion to direct authority, to ensure that library staff are motivated and clear about their roles to achieve organizational goals. They optimize the work environment by allocating resources and adjusting communication to help staff meet corporate objectives. Borkowski *et al.* (2011) state that effective leadership involves communicating the organization's values, vision, and mission to inspire higher productivity. Nwaigwe (2015) emphasizes that no organization can function without leaders to organize, implement policies, and motivate staff, suggesting that a library's success heavily depends on the librarian's leadership style.

Leadership style, as defined by Cherry (2021), encompasses a leader's behaviors when directing, motivating, and managing people. Gonos and Gallo (2013) describe it as how leaders use their power and competence to influence subordinates, focusing on achieving group objectives (Adegbesan, 2013). Effective leadership in libraries involves influencing staff to work towards common goals, highlighting the importance of adopting the right leadership style to overcome poor leadership obstacles (Akidi and Chukwueke, 2020). Owera (2019) adds that good leadership involves listening, supporting, and encouraging staff, fostering team-building, and skilled decision-making.

Management style impacts every part of an organization, and its significance has grown due to globalization, competition, and technological advancements (Chukwuma and Idris, 2009). Eneh (2008) notes that a leader's style gives an organization its vision and ability to realize it, though no single leadership style is universally best. Libraries may adopt various styles – autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, transformational, or transactional – depending on circumstances.

Autocratic Leadership: This style, as described by Adeyemi (2010), is authoritative and involves the leader making decisions without subordinate input, often resulting in high productivity but low staff morale.

Democratic Leadership: This style involves leaders and followers working together to set policies and make decisions, fostering creativity, innovation, and a sense of belonging among staff, leading to higher productivity (Chukwusa, 2019).

Laissez-faire Leadership: This style gives subordinates maximum authority and minimal leader intervention, effective when employees are highly skilled and self-motivated, but often resulting in low productivity otherwise (Nwaigwe, 2015).

Transformational Leadership: Transformational leaders inspire and motivate staff through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, leading to high productivity and innovation (Grant, 2012).

Transactional Leadership: This style is based on rewards and punishments, motivating staff through contingent reinforcement, and setting clear goals and standards, which can effectively influence productivity and performance (Peterson, 2012).

The chosen leadership style significantly affects staff morale, motivation, and overall organizational productivity. Thus, librarians must carefully select and adapt their leadership styles to foster an efficient and motivated workforce.

Management Practice in different Libraries

Management in Academic library
Academic libraries are integral to educational institutions like colleges and universities. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) emphasizes their crucial role in supporting universities and fulfilling their academic missions. IFLA's University Libraries Section aims to integrate libraries into the core functions of learning, teaching, research, and services. Academic libraries help students, researchers, and faculty by enhancing their self-discovery, critical thinking, and scholastic efficiency through self-study. Their primary function is to support the study and teaching activities within the institution, aiming to engage the academic community, promote intelligent use of resources, and foster appreciation of libraries as academic entities (Chowdhury, 2001). The effectiveness of an academic library can be measured by the extent to which students and faculty utilize its resources.

Managing academic libraries focuses on achieving institutional objectives (Fakudze, 1996). Corrall (1993) suggests that adapting to future changes requires new management approaches and a strategic vision that resonates with both staff and users. For instance, Harvard University outlined a strategic plan addressing collection development, automation, and cooperation with other research collections, stressing user needs and training in resource utilization. The plan also noted the increasing offsite storage of holdings and the continuous evolution of library roles.

Libraries are increasingly converging with other services like computing, driven by the development of new learning resource centers. This convergence presents challenges, including the need for cross-disciplinary teams and multi-skilled staff to support a broader range of services. Heseltine (1995) highlights the importance of collaboration in collection development and storage, with examples like the Consortium of Academic Librarians in Manchester (CALIM) in the UK, which promotes cooperative acquisition and access schemes.

Staff management is also evolving, requiring more proactive and adaptable personnel. Whiston (1995) emphasizes the growing importance of professional development, training, appraisal, and performance review, alongside addressing financial support issues. Fakudze (1996) identifies four major management functions in academic libraries: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, which form the basis for empirical studies on academic library management. This study will examine academic library management from these four perspectives.

Management in Public library

Elaturoti, as cited in Ifidon (2012), defines a public library as an organization established, supported, and funded by the community through local, regional, or national government or other community organizations. It provides access to knowledge, information, and creative works through various resources and services, available to all community members regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, etc. The collections and services should include all types of media and modern technologies, free from ideological, political, religious, or commercial pressures. Public libraries must be supported by specific legislation. This underscores the public library's role in serving the information needs of the community, necessitating efforts to provide relevant collections.

The significance of public libraries can be measured by their positive impact on society, which depends on the efficiency of their organization and operations. Public libraries must serve their entire community, bridging the gap between the urban rich and poor, and the rural educated, illiterate, and poor populations. They should promote information literacy, enabling citizens to identify their information needs, locate and use information effectively, and employ modern ICTs.

Globally, public libraries are managed by various levels of government—national, state, and local. Librarians manage day-to-day operations but do not govern; they operate under the direction of a governing body, such as a Library Board. For example, the Imo State Library Board is responsible for establishing, equipping, and maintaining the State Library and its branches, and providing necessary services as per the law.

Management in School Libraries

School libraries are integral to the educational environment, supporting students' learning activities to achieve educational goals. Effective management of school libraries involves planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating to improve the quality of students' and teachers' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

1. **Planning:** Successful planning involves participation from library staff, principals, teachers, employees, and students. It includes processing appropriate materials, needs-based procurement planning, promotion activities, funding certainty, and excellent visitor services.
2. **Organization:** Effective organization requires a clear organizational structure, division of labor, authority, unity of command, and coordination.

3. **Implementation:** Successful implementation involves participatory decision-making, direction and motivation from leaders, healthy communication, and recognition of librarians' contributions.
4. **Evaluation:** Effective evaluation requires periodic written reports and comprehensive statistical data describing the library's activities.

Current Trends in Library Management

Next-generation leaders in academic libraries must focus on collaboration, leadership development, and acquiring effective leadership skills and qualities. The structure for guiding these efforts includes four key sections:

1. **Collaboration**:
   - **Importance**: Collaboration is vital for the success of academic libraries. Library professionals are encouraged to work with external communities to enhance their reach and impact.
   - **Responsibilities**: Library leaders must have a deep understanding of their roles and be actively involved in the curriculum, research activities, and feedback processes within their institutions. This involvement ensures that library resources are aligned with the institution's educational goals and research needs.
   - **User Engagement**: To maximize the use of library resources, libraries must collaborate closely with faculty, researchers, and students. This engagement helps make users aware of the full range of available resources and services.
   - **Modern Approaches**: Traditional methods of learning and library services are becoming obsolete. Libraries need to adopt new approaches and information literacy initiatives that resonate with modern teaching techniques and user needs. This includes classroom engagement, tailored instructions, and outreach programs to foster a deeper connection with users.
2. **Emerging Trends**:
   - **Challenges**: Libraries face numerous challenges, such as managing open access materials, adapting to changing modes of scholarly communication, maintaining digitized content, redesigning learning commons, competing with digital information providers like Google and Amazon, and operating under shrinking budgets.
   - **Adaptation**: To address these challenges, libraries must develop policies and strategies that support evolving user needs. This requires leaders who can think strategically and implement effective responses to these emerging trends, ensuring the library remains a vital resource for the academic community.
3. **Skills and Qualities**:
   - **Required Skills**: Effective leadership in academic libraries requires a diverse set of skills and qualities. Leaders must align their skills development with the strategic direction of their organization and continuously seek to improve their knowledge and competencies.

- o **Continuous Development**: Keeping up to date with the latest trends and technologies is crucial for library leaders. This ongoing development ensures that leaders can meet the increasing service expectations of users and adapt to the shifting educational landscape.
  - o **Innovation and Flexibility**: Leaders need to be innovative and flexible, capable of building relationships and partnerships, and adept at navigating the complexities of modern academic libraries. They must also foster a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability within their teams.
4. **Leadership Development Opportunities**:
   - o **Importance**: Developing leadership skills is essential for the long-term success of academic libraries. However, opportunities for leadership development are often limited by budget constraints and access to programs.
   - o **Programs**: Renowned programs like the UCLA Senior Fellows Program and the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute provide valuable opportunities for library professionals to develop their leadership skills.
   - o **Local Initiatives**: Institutions should organize local training and workshops to maximize participation and benefit. Collaborating with other institutions can enhance these programs, providing a richer learning experience and fostering professional networks.
   - o **Mentoring and Networking**: Mentoring is a critical component of leadership development, helping to maintain strong leadership and continuity. Networking, both locally and internationally, provides opportunities to share knowledge, gain new insights, and build professional relationships that support leadership growth.

Impediments to Innovative Practices

The common impediments to innovative practices include:

1. **Under and Mal-Employment**: Issues with job fit and underemployment can stifle innovation.
2. **Unhealthy Work Environment**: Poor work conditions can negatively impact staff morale and productivity.
3. **Bureaucratic and Administrative Issues**: Excessive bureaucracy can hinder swift decision-making and implementation of new ideas.
4. **Red-Tapeism, Nepotism, Sycophancy, Favoritism**: These issues can create an unfair and inefficient work environment.
5. **Lack of Proper Training and Job Suitability**: Insufficient training and mismatched job roles can prevent staff from performing effectively.
6. **Lack of Enthusiasm Toward Job**: A lack of zeal and excitement for the job can reduce overall effectiveness and innovation.

Conclusion

Academic libraries globally face similar challenges, including the transition from print to electronic resources, maintaining relevancy, and balancing modern and traditional leadership

roles. These emerging trends impact both libraries and their leaders. Effective leadership can navigate these difficulties by developing new skills and traits. Dynamic leadership is crucial, especially in challenging times. The paper highlights the lack of skills development among library leaders due to insufficient organizational support, emphasizing the importance of institutional backing and personal interest in professional growth.

Innovation is essential for success and must be encouraged within organizations to prevent stagnation. The expansion of higher education, particularly in India, presents new challenges for university and library administration. Retaining trained human resources is critical for institutional growth. Building strong relationships at all management levels and delegating authority effectively are vital for fostering innovation and exploring managerial talents in subordinates.

Human resource development, welfare, and retention should be central to any institution's vision. Prioritizing employee welfare fosters dedication and loyalty. Institutions should embrace reformative measures, adopting new technologies and discarding outdated practices to enhance institutional betterment. Obstacles to innovation should be addressed through reinforcing techniques, continually seeking practices and values that benefit the organization.

Recommendations

There are some additional skills and qualities with the tradition to become a successful future leader and these qualities can be developed such as creativity, flexibility, and adapt to change, self-confidence and awareness, collaborative mindset, networking capability and become a visionary. Furthermore, library leaders will have to develop effective communication skills, personal interest, motivate themselves and others, and engage in all activities of professional practice, and develop concrete action plans.

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